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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KISL](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OPDC](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: FORWARD THINKING TO NEGATE "DEFAMATION OF  
RELIGION" IN THE UN (S/ES: 200922459) - MOROCCO STRATEGY

REF: A. STATE 128320  
[1](#)B. RABAT 0994 (NOTAL)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Mission Morocco's strategy for engaging the host government and civil society to cease supporting "defamation of religions" proposals at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and elsewhere focuses on two main strategic objectives: (1) urging the GOM to vote against such resolutions (or at least abstain), in a manner that reflects its already proven reputation as a moderate, tolerant majority-Muslim nation; and (2) to continue to be a voice of reason, behind the scenes, within the Arab League and other groupings typically vote in favor of such resolutions. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In our formal demarches to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation and our less formal discussions with Moroccan officials in other ministries -- including most notably the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (MOEIA) (Septel) -- we consistently find our interlocutors to be reasonable, tolerant and broadminded regarding the counterproductive nature of "defamation of religion" proposals and the divisiveness they engender. The vast range of GOM officials, including King Mohammed VI in his role as "The Commander of the Faithful," are proud of Morocco's long-standing traditions as a tolerant, moderate nation. Morocco's domestic and foreign policies emphasize the importance of accepting and accommodating religious diversity at home, and of engaging in cross-cultural and cross-cult dialogue abroad. The GOM is rightly proud of the fact that the tiny Christian and Jewish minorities in Morocco are generally free to worship as they please, protected as necessary under Moroccan legislation, and socially accepted by the vast majority of Moroccans. It has also consistently reached out to Israeli officials, despite mounting and shrill criticism from domestic Islamist factions and some of its more hard-line Arab allies.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Within this positive context, our challenge is to convince the Moroccan MFA to vote against (or abstain from voting on) "defamation of religion" proposals in the international arena in a way that reflects the tolerance and domestic policies toward religion evinced by the GOM at home. We know that Morocco consistently seeks to act as a "voice of reason" within the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in its discussions with Middle East and North Africa (MENA) partners who are members of the HRC. However, despite this helpful role, the GOM still tends to vote with the Arab League bloc once the internal discussions have finished and the unhelpful resolutions move to the floor. Recently, we have had some luck in moving Morocco toward "abstain" on other issues (namely Iran) despite the pressure it faces from its Arab allies, but not on others. This includes "defamation" resolutions, despite off-the-record acknowledgments from MFA officials that those resolutions do nothing to forward the GOM's other policy

goals -- i.e., dialogue, exchange, tolerance -- for the region.

¶4. (SBU) We should not underestimate the importance of voices of reason, such as Morocco's, within the Arab League and OIC, even if those voices do not ultimately prevent defamation resolutions from coming forward or vote with us when a resolution comes to the floor. We view our MFA, MOEIA and other GOM interlocutors as intellectual allies on these issues, and will continue to dialogue with them in hopes of expanding their room to maneuver against the defamation resolutions. Finally, we note that as Staffdel Hogrefe heard in September, intervening early so that the Moroccans can assist us before the OIC and Arab League agree on language, is vital.

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